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Contributed Notes.

Political Parties in Israel. It seems at first glance like a profanation or degradation of the life of ancient Israel to find anything like "politics" appearing in its history. Our conception of this people—at least our ideal conception—is that of a nation somehow living apart, to itself, or to Jehovah rather, on a higher plane than that of other oriental peoples. It strikes us that a social and national life corresponding to this high position ought to have been exhibited by them. It may be that such a notion lay at the bottom of the reverential attitude of the Puritans which led them to make the old Hebrew life the model of their own attempts at social organization. But, of course, any real historical study of the Old Testament history effectually dissipates such ideas. A careful fundamental investigation of the historical, social and national life of Israel will lead to surprising results, revealing the ebbing and flowing of political life, the clash of parties, the intrigues, conspiracies, rise and fall of social and national idea is, and, in short, all that makes up "politics." It is still more surprising to find among the leading politicians of the stirring periods of ninth and eighth century history, the *prophets*. No one can gain a correct idea of the political movements, the historical tendencies and issues of these times, without taking these personalities, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, into the account. If, as cannot be doubted by any intelligent student, their personal attitude and ideals stand at the root of their immortal teachings, their historic position and activity become very important to the student of their message to the church in all ages. Some of their great prophecies were, at the first, political speeches or pamphlets. Their symbolic acts and sayings were often intended to have a direct and immediate effect upon persons and projects which concerned "politics" in Israel, or Egypt, or Assyria, or Babylon. These great prophets are, in this political sphere, only representatives of many others in the prophetic and priestly circles, around the king and among the people, who were practical and active politicians—in other words, who sought to have a part in directing and influencing affairs of state. Each circle had its ideas and tendencies; each formed a "party"; each had, not merely speculative ideals, but earthly objects for which they gave their energies, and sometimes risked—and lost—their lives.

For myself, I confess that to this view of Israel's life it was at first somewhat difficult for me to adapt my ideas. But if the view is a true one, and further study only deepens this conviction, then such a picture of such a life must have been intended to teach its appropriate lesson. And when one reflects upon it, the recognition of the importance of the "political element" in the biblical life will bring with it much inspiring and permanently helpful teaching. It deepens the *reality* of the biblical life. It makes more vivid the *likeness* of that life to ours. It adds to the essential *dignity* of those great prophets, while it removes that false sanctity which separates them from the human brotherhood. For any who are interested in the subject, I desire to suggest one or two points possibly helpful in further investigation.

- 1) It is a very strange fact, and yet one very easy of explanation, that the

political policy of the great prophets was that which was directly opposed to the *national* welfare. It was destruction of the old Israel. Prophetic "politics" really ruined the nation. From the secular point of view their ideals were completely unrealizable, their principles irrational, their methods of carrying out their ideals and principles perfect moonshine; or, rather, their whole policy involved the overthrow of existing institutions, institutions which seemed to have had the sanction of the highest wisdom and to have been founded and favored by Jehovah. The fact that they succeeded is the fact of Jerusalem's destruction. The significance of their position was not always clear to themselves, but at times the greatest of them recognized it, as, for example, Isaiah, when at the end of his life he recounted the fact of his "call" and explained its significance (chapt. 6); or Jeremiah, when he interpreted his work as two-fold, "tearing down" as well as "building up."

2) The impression cannot be avoided that we have but one side of the prophetic element or life, represented in the Bible, namely, that element which *succeeded*. The defeated "party" is not given a chance to present its side of the case. No doubt there were many in Israel who thought that they loved God who were not in sympathy with "prophetic politics." They were just as sincerely loyal to God as were the prophets. From their point of view Jehovah seemed to lead the nation in a direction opposite to that in which the prophets would lead it. That intensely interesting twenty-eighth chapter of Jeremiah may be taken as an example, where Hananiah and Jeremiah come to open conflict. What ground can there be for holding that the former was corrupt and godless and only the latter sincere? None. It is simply that the one was mistaken, profoundly and yet sincerely mistaken, while Jeremiah had the truth, knew the mind and purpose of God. This view of the situation is the only one that satisfies it. It also brings the whole scene nearer to us and teaches us vividly and strongly the necessity of thorough conviction, humble dependence upon God, and also the duty of avoiding harsh judgment, the need of sympathy with those who may be in the wrong, when we feel compelled to denounce their views.

3) Books which are helpful for the study of the subject of "Politics in Israel" are very few. A good book could be written on the "History of Political Parties in the Hebrew State." Robertson Smith's "Prophets of Israel" gives some useful hints. Driver's Isaiah and Cheyne's Jeremiah are good. A book on "Jewish History and Politics in the Times of Sargon and Sennacherib" by Sir Edward Strachey, is a fair model for wider investigation. In the various modern histories of Israel, especially Ewald's, will be found much helpful material.

G. S.

Philo the Jew and the Bible. The Bible and biblical life are in many respects things apart from the ordinary life and thought of men. Yet in many other respects they stand and stood in intimate relation to the movements of humanity. The student is constantly seeking these points of contact in the historical sphere as the preacher strives to present them in the practical sphere. The latter endeavor may be said to rest on the former. The historical tangency of the Bible, or rather its historical inweaving with the life of the times in which its books were written, the broader historical relations of the movement of life it narrates, these are the foundations of a vivid realization and vigorous application of its present-day teachings. It is from this point of